

The Association of  
FRIENDS OF LA PROVIDENCE

Annual Report 2004  
**Lord and Lady Radnor**

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The Earl of Radnor

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Mrs L.McCarragher

**Registered Charity No. 219318**

## Foreword

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I find it impossible to start this year's Report to the Friends of La Providence without saying that my own visits to the Hospital can never be quite the same again. I had become used to travelling to Rochester with my wife Jill as my travelling companion, and now her untimely death in March has taken that pleasure away. I was hugely touched by the number of cards and letters that I received from residents of La Providence, and the strong representation from La Providence in Salisbury Cathedral.

It seems to me, though, that the past year has been a good one for the Hospital. Until very recently the occupancy rate has been excellent. Planned improvements have been largely finished, showers have been installed in many flats, and the inevitable disturbance of building will perhaps subside, and Residents will be able to enjoy the use of the new lifts.

So far as showers are concerned, I have used one myself for a number of years now, and I hope the pleasure and convenience, not to mention safety, is shared by those who use them.

So far as improvements and maintenance is concerned, this inevitably will be on-going in some form or another, and it is right that we should always be aware of improvements that would make life easier and pleasanter for Residents. Carefully planned change can be excellent, and I know only too well that the directors and officers of La Providence are well equipped to plan and undertake such matters.

Spring moved into Summer, when the Square looked lovely. Once upon a time I felt banning traffic from the High Street would be a disaster. Now, I have to admit, its conversion for much of the day to a pedestrian walkway is a pleasant improvement.

The Anniversary in June is long gone, and I was able to be there to enjoy the whole scene with everyone else, as I usually do.

Finally, the support of the "Friends of La Providence" is appreciated by all of us. Do please continue your interest in what is a very important place, and encourage others to join your band.

*Radnor,*

*Governor*

## The Countess of Radnor, 1936-2004

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All at La Providence felt the death of Lady Radnor on 11 March 2004 as an acute personal loss. It was some solace for many of us to attend her funeral in a packed Salisbury Cathedral and to gather afterwards as the Governor's guests at Longford Castle.

We learned much about Lady Radnor's public service and her family's love for her in some memorable addresses at the funeral. A former Argentine Ambassador and friend of the Radnors spoke of her "active support" of Lord Radnor's public work, specifically mentioning "The French Hospital, La Providence".

It was, of course, at La Providence that most of us knew her best, through her visits when Lord Radnor was attending Court meetings (he and she would lunch with the Directors) or other events. Her direct and warm-hearted approach was exemplified by the card she sent to one couple, whom she had visited to meet them and see their "disabled" flat. It thanked them for their hospitality and was signed, with friendly informality, "Jill".

Though Countess of Radnor and chatelaine of one of England's great houses, Jill Radnor's life had not always been easy. Born in Patagonia to an English father, and an Argentine mother, she was widowed with two small children and a third expected when her first husband, Squadron Leader Anthony Pettit DSO, DFC and Bar, was killed in a plane crash. She lived on at their house in Peru until she brought the children to school in England and met again Lord Radnor, who had worked on her father's ranch in the Argentine in 1949. They married in 1986, after which she took an enthusiastic and creative part in Lord Radnor's public life and was at the centre of a large and loving extended family circle.

She spoke with particular fondness of La Providence and highly valued Lord Radnor's role as Governor of The French Hospital, where everyone who knew her will always remember her with affection and respect as the Governor's lady who was "one of us". Our memories of her make our sympathy for Lord Radnor in his sad loss all the more profound.

### ***Randolph Vigne***

#### The Year in Brief

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This past year has been overshadowed by the sad death of Lady Radnor. The Governor comments upon his loss in his introduction, and there is an obituary on the following page, but I know that everyone – residents, staff, Friends and Directors alike - would wish to join me in offering our condolences and prayers to the Governor and all his family. Lady Radnor was a regular visitor in recent years when the Governor was attending Court meetings, and it was always a pleasure when she joined us for lunch after the meeting. She took much enjoyment in meeting residents and keeping up-to-date with events in the Square. There was always a twinkle in her eye when she announced that she was going to do "a little shopping in the High Street", and many items from the local shops returned to Longford for Christmas and birthday presents. We all miss her greatly.

We are glad to welcome new faces among our residents, staff and friends, and sorry that some are no longer with us. On the staff side, after eight years with The French Hospital, our Deputy Steward, Karen Sussex, has moved on to teach IT at a local college and we wish her well in her new venture. Noreen Curling, another Deputy Steward has also left us. However, in compensation, Trevor Moore, a former Steward and now a resident, has joined the Steward's team. In addition Maxine Stevens and another long-time friend, Jeanette Harris, have also joined the group. We welcome them all and wish them a long and happy stay with us.

We have had another busy year on the property side, with the constant round of repairs and improvements, together with the day-to-day work that is all part of keeping La Providence in a good state. We continue with our schedule to improve the flats as necessity dictates and funds permit, with kitchens and bathrooms at the top of our list. We were all delighted when the new lift became operational, an article is due to appear in the Almshouse Gazette, and we congratulate our Surveyor on another excellent project. We will never be able to provide all flats with level or lift access, but with the completion of this new project we now have a very high percentage.

The long-running saga of the problem with the electric gates to the car park at 99 High Street is finally drawing to a conclusion. Listed Building Consent for the necessary changes has at last been agreed after a year of frustrated efforts by the Surveyor, and the agreed solution is in line with his original proposals!

We are always most grateful to our Garden Committee, Lady Monson, Dr Fenton, Mrs Letheren and Karen Sussex for all their hard work. With Karen's departure Jeanette has now taken over with great enthusiasm. Whether by accident or design – I am sure that it was the latter - the Square looked magnificent for the Anniversary, and was much praised by both civic dignitaries and the large number of visitors.

Security is a constant concern, and the gates have proven to be an excellent barrier, though one athletic young man has been observed "scaling the heights"! The CCTV and *Shopsafe* systems have also given staff an added sense of security at night when we are at our most vulnerable.

At the risk of repeating myself, the most important part of La Providence is the people, the Residents, Staff and Directors. The Steward and his wife, Robbie and Gwen Harris-Liston, together with their team of Deputies, have kept an eye on Residents and Directors alike, and the Directors are most appreciative of the care that we receive when we visit La Providence each month. As always, our thanks to Trevor Moore, Les Davies, Tony Trower and others for their help and support throughout the year.

We were saddened at the death of Yvonne Davies, so long a part of the management team of the Square when Les was Steward, and also that of Adèle Duval, the wife of Robert Duval – one of our Directors.

I will leave the Secretary to report on the Anniversary, but it was a pleasure to welcome Pastor Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy from the French Church in Canterbury, as preacher. I now refuse to accept his insistence that his command of English is not up to the challenge, as he gave us a most thought-provoking and enjoyable sermon!

Again it has been another busy year on our website - [www.frenchhospital.org](http://www.frenchhospital.org)

I close with my personal thanks to all those hardworking individuals, Officers, Staff, Directors, and others - often unacknowledged – who help to make life easier for us all. Beside those already mentioned in this report I gratefully acknowledge Mrs Kate McGregor's support for the Clerk, Mrs Lucy McCarraher's patient editing of this publication, Randolph Vigne for his editorial and genealogical advice, our Accountants and Auditors. Also congratulations to the Chaplain, Howard Daubney, who has been appointed to his first Parish as Vicar in Strood. To these, and many more that I may have forgotten, my most sincere thanks.

***Peter Duval***

## An Uplifting Experience

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At La Providence, the four flats on the first and second floors of No. 119 High Street, above the shop unit, were accessed by an external staircase, identified as an area of concern for some time. As part of the ongoing review of access on the site, a scheme evolved to insert a platform lift and enclose both the external stairs and the lift within an extension.

La Providence is situated in the centre of the Rochester High Street Conservation Area and most of the buildings are Grade II Listed. This dictates very careful detailing of any proposed building works even though the building of this project is, in itself, not listed. Design restraints were further exacerbated as the location for the lift is immediately adjacent to the remains of the Roman City Wall. Initial sketches were discussed informally with the Conservation Officer, including addressing the principles of piled foundations as well as materials for roof tiles, facing bricks and the method of construction. A specification for an Archaeological Watching Brief was also agreed, not only with the Local Authority Conservation Officer, but also with County Archaeological Officer. The foundation design had to be archaeologically sympathetic.

Cavity brick and block walls form the main structure with attention to detail on the brickwork included using Flemish bond with snapped headers as being sympathetic to surrounding Listed Buildings. A cut and pitch roof with clay peg tiles to match in with the existing building, softened the impact on the existing building and surroundings. The lift platform itself is within a static enclosure and is a four-person 400kg lift. Adaptation of existing paths resulted in "level access" to four flats formerly accessed only by an external staircase that gave no protection from the weather.

This project brings the total number of flats with level or lift access to 43 out of the 56 on site. The remaining 13 flats are unsuitable for the creation of lift access due to the layout.

This is the third lift project on The French Hospital site, the second of which was dovetailed into the Listed Buildings effectively to give level access to a total of 18 flats for the first time, which were formerly accessed only by staircases.

***JK Daffarn FRICS,  
Surveyor***

## Financial Overview

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Others have dealt fully with the major building project fore-shadowed in last year's Annual Report. It suffices here to identify the financial aspects of the work. The cost of the completed "Lift 3" project has been approximately £130,000 - which includes about £23,000 for the lift itself. The building work went slightly over the budget figure mentioned last year, partly due to associated extra work which was better done at the same time, but mainly because of extra work needed once foundations came to be laid - the discovery of uncharted utilities' pipes (which may or may not be live!) being a not infrequent hazard in the area of Rochester High Street.

The substantial legacy received in the year 2000 was a major factor in the financing of the earlier Lift project with something remaining for the current Lift. However, inevitably there has been a call on our Reserves, which means the sale of securities. Not only do we have to make a reserve for problems uncovered during the Quinquennial inspection, which we hope are kept to a minimum by dealing with problems as they arise, but the impact of government regulations and rising expectations from existing and potential Residents need to be considered. For this reason it is with regret that we have had to increase the contributions of Residents by 4 - 5%, to help with the

shortfall between other sources of income and the expenditure. Nevertheless, the contributions from Residents remain significantly below the "fair" rent assessed by relevant official bodies. Only by this means can we continue to provide sheltered accommodation in accordance with our constitution.

We have continued to rely on donations to augment our resources and legacies remain an important factor. In common with many other charities, the latter source is of considerable importance and we commend it to supporters of the work of La Providence as a means of helping the work. La Providence is not too far off its Tercentenary, so we need to strive to continue its work into another centenary.

The subscriptions from the supporters of The Friends of La Providence, as distinct from the charity of La Providence itself, are used mainly towards outings and also the tea party for residents and guests held after the annual Anniversary Service in Rochester Cathedral that brings to a most happy conclusion what is always a memorable occasion.

**Kenneth Bradford**

**WELCOME - to the following new Friends:**

Lord Radnor  
Mr & Mrs D.A.C. Ayres (Langdon Hills)  
Prof R.A. Buchanan & Dr B.J. Buchanan (Bath)  
Mr M.J.G. Fletcher (London)  
Mr & Mrs C.J.T. Fossey (Melksham)  
Mrs S.E. Kersey (La Providence)  
Mrs D. Parsons (La Providence)  
Mr S. Rondeau (London)  
Mr & Mrs A.H. Spencer (La Providence)  
Mr P.E. Stokes (Horsham)  
Mrs V.E. Trapaud (La Providence)

**Profile of a Resident - Mrs Aileen Leggett**

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*The French Hospital is home to more than sixty residents and they come from many different families and backgrounds. I had the privilege of visiting our oldest resident Mrs Aileen Leggett recently and learning something of her long and interesting life.*

Mrs Leggett welcomed me into her cosy home one morning and accepted my admiration at how well kept it was. On the 1st August 2004 Mrs Leggett celebrated her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday, which makes it 24 years since she first came to The French Hospital. I found it hard to believe that this lady could have achieved such an age and remain as independent and erect.

She was born in Willesden Green and had a happy childhood with her parents, three sisters and a brother. She knew of her Huguenot ancestry from an early age and said that her parents had been born in adjoining cottages near Upnor. She thought that all the occupants of the six or so dwellings were Huguenots too but sadly the cottages are no longer there.

After her schooldays Mrs Leggett worked with families looking after children but later she moved to caring for the elderly in residential homes which she found more satisfying. Her dream was to train as a State Registered Nurse but it was some years before she was able to realise her ambition. She was able to complete her training at St Bartholomew's Hospital in Rochester. While she was doing this, she met and married her husband and life for her changed dramatically. He was an engineer and found work in Nigeria, so the couple spent the next fifteen years living in Africa only returning to England for home leaves.

We jump now to 1974 when Mrs Leggett was staying near Rochester and seeking accommodation. A local estate agent told her about The French Hospital and she hurried along to see the Steward, Mr Les Davies, who advised her how to apply for one of the two available flats. Her application was successful and she was able to move into the flat, which she still occupies today. Mrs Leggett enjoys the company here and made many friends in the local Natural History Society. In recent years Mrs Leggett has had to give up some of her activities but she still enjoys reading and is an enthusiastic member of the Friends of La Providence. **Kate McGregor**

## Friends and Family - from John and Dorothy Youé

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Our association with The French Hospital began in 1857 when Sarah Youé entered La Providence! This Sarah, not to be confused with other Sarahs in the family, was the widow Platt (*née* Jones), daughter of John Jones and Sarah Vandome. Sarah married the widowed great-great-grandfather, Benjamin, of John Youé in 1815. Benjamin, a silk weaver of 123 Brick Lane, predeceased his wife in 1844.

It was not until 1995, after about 30 years of intent, that John joined the Huguenot Society and set about tracing his family and, through a connection, was made aware that some of his relatives had been 'inmates' of La Providence and that he might find some of the entries in the Huguenot Society's Quarto Publication Vol. LIII both informative and amusing.

Sarah had two daughters named Elizabeth and Caroline by Benjamin and it appears to be Caroline who applied to the Hospital, when her mother became senile, to have "charge and care" of her herself. The Hospital agreed and financially supported Caroline in this endeavour. Subsequently Elizabeth and Caroline became inmates of La Providence. The printed archives record that Caroline, in 1885 [age 72 years] 'was reported for outrageous conduct and insubordination was severely reprimanded . . . and ordered to do all the washing up and be "gated" for a month'. [John would dearly like to know what 'the outrageous behaviour' entailed and Dorothy hopes it isn't hereditary!]. The testimonials provided at the time of Caroline's own entry to the Hospital suggest that not only was she a caring daughter, but of impeccable character. It may also be worth recording here the letter, also placed with her mother's notes, of the letter Caroline sent to the Hospital at the time of her mother's death:

'2 Roland Grove, Wells Road, Sydenham, Kent

Mr Hillard

Sir My Dear Prescoius mother is gone to her rest

She died very gently and quietly last night at a quarter Past 10. the doctor here at 8 oclock & he said she was sinking fast.

We shall Bury her next Wendsday at Brockley Kent

I remaine Sir very respectfuley Caroline Youe'

A further mystery is the record exactly one year after the misdemeanour: 'leave was granted to James Huard and Caroline Youé to go to Brighton for a time.'[!]

Huet and Hué are possible names from which Youé was derived. A French website gives Huard as a diminutive of Huet. Is this a clue to Caroline and James being related in any way? And why were they allowed to go to Brighton for a time? The answer to the latter may lie in The Huguenot Society Quarto volume LII. Above the entry for James Huard is one for Esther Sarah Huard. The entry advises that: 'Mrs Huard applied for £2 to enable her to go to the seaside to recruit (*sic*) from an accident'. The leave was granted together with £2 on July 6 1895, the same day leave was granted to James Huard and Caroline 'to go to Brighton for a time'. Maybe James and Esther Huard were related and James and Caroline were escorts/companions for Esther Huard's journey?

With such connections how could we not become Friends of La Providence? It is with some amazement that with the numbers who have been given succour and support by the Hospital that the Friends' membership is so small even when considered only as a percentage of the Fellows of the Huguenot Society. Maybe the historic and continuing care of our charity should be more widely publicised so as to gain the support so well deserved, no matter how modest.

## La Providence on line

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Once again, the website for The French Hospital has attracted growing interest from around the world. From the statistics provided by Easyspace.com, who kindly host the site free of charge, it is possible to glean all sorts of information about the usage of the site, including the following:

- There has been an increase in average weekly page views to over 380 for the year to the end of August 2004, from the equivalent average of 250 per week over the same period last year.
- The most popular pages viewed (other than the home page) are:

- The annual reports (combined page views)
- History of the Huguenots
- History of The French Hospital
- Rochester
- Directors of The French Hospital

Numerous requests have come in via the website for genealogical information, sometimes asking specifically about ancestral links to The French Hospital and sometimes with more general requests. Whilst the more general requests are usually passed on to the Huguenot Society, which is better equipped to assist, the Clerk, the Deputy Governor and others have frequently been able to provide information regarding family links to La Providence.

The Clerk has also commented on the number of requests for French Hospital mementoes received during the year. The various items available can be found on the 'Gifts' page of the website and the insert to this Report.

As always, if you have any ideas for additional content that you would be interested in seeing on the website, or indeed would like to submit something to be considered for inclusion, please send them either to the Clerk, or via e-mail to [ideas@frenchhospital.org.uk](mailto:ideas@frenchhospital.org.uk) .

***Alex Duval***

### **From The Steward and Deputy Stewards**

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I can't believe that come 12<sup>th</sup> November 2004, four years will have elapsed since I came here to live and work as a Steward for The French Hospital. It has taken all of this time to gain the experience, confidence and capability to manage all the many, varied tasks and occurrences of my working day.

Everyday life at The French Hospital is an endless, ever-changing canvas, with happy times, as well as sad ones. New Residents come and add a breath of fresh air; they get a very warm welcome from those who have been here longer. Everyone has a tale to tell; nothing stands still for very long.

Unfortunately, this year, under the Chairmanship of two Residents, Jack and Maureen Minett, the Social Committee has resigned. The Committee felt that it was time to give other people the chance to have a go and, with reluctance, we had to accept their wishes. The Committee has done a splendid job and the monthly lunches will be especially missed. Fortunately, David Brookes, one of our new Residents has taken up the challenge of running the Bingo evenings and Miss Doreen Chaundy, who did so much to help with the social activities in the past, has again, very kindly offered to organise some events in the Common Room. The first of these functions was in mid July, and Miss Chaundy, assisted by Mrs Coleen Admiraal and other volunteers, ensured it was a great success.

We have said farewell to Noreen Curling and Karen Sussex during the year and warmly welcomed Trevor Moore from retirement and Mrs Maxine Stevens to the team of Deputy Stewards. All of us are looking forward to another busy, but enjoyable year on "the Square".

***Robert Harris-Liston***

### Pastoral Care

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It gives me great pleasure to be able to write this report in my eleventh year as Chaplain to The French Hospital. However, this pleasure is touched by sadness as a number of residents have died since my last report. They are: Mr J.R. Bell, Mr S.D. Conley, Mrs Y. Davies, Mr A.E.S. Le Core, Mrs B.F. Riley, Mr P.M. Reid and Mrs K.M. Tranah. Mr Le Core and Mrs Tranah were regular members of our weekly congregation and are sadly missed each Wednesday. Mrs Jeffery, who moved away from La Providence a year ago to live in Folkestone, has also died. Mr and Mrs W. Kilminster left the square this year to live elsewhere, as have Miss G.G. Fauvel and Mrs I.M. Philpott.

As Chaplain at La Providence I care for the pastoral needs of Residents. A service of Holy Communion is held every week in the Common Room on Wednesday morning. All Residents are welcome to attend this service together with friends or relatives who might be visiting them. The collection taken at this service goes to charity. This year we sent £520 to the Sudan Emergency Appeal. I visit the sick or anyone who requests a visit, including in time of bereavement, giving home communion where appropriate.

This year I arranged an outing to Brighton for the residents. We visited Groombridge Place for tea on the way back and were blessed with a beautiful sunny summer's day.

I am very grateful to Prebendary John Prior and Canon Gordon Oliver who have kindly taken the weekly services when I have been on holiday.

***Revd Howard Daubney***

### **The 2004 Anniversary and Artefacts**

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The 286<sup>th</sup> Anniversary service was held in Rochester Cathedral on Saturday afternoon on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June. Lord Radnor the Governor was present with our principal guests: the Mayor of Medway, Councillor Mrs Susan Haydock, the acting Dean of Rochester, Canon Jonathan Meyrick, and Mrs Meyrick, Mrs Joan Sharp and Miss E. K. Nuoy, the Preacher's sister. A record number of over 170 members of the congregation connected with The French Hospital attended the Service.

Mrs Ralph Godsell in her fluent French read the Penitential Introduction and other prayers. The first lesson was read by the Canon in Residence, the second lesson by Mr Jonathan Ouvry. Amongst the congregation who listened to the Anthem, "Blessed City" by Sir Cuthbert Bairstow, was his granddaughter, Mrs Ruth Bellord. Pasteur Lusa Nsenga-Nuoy of the Huguenot Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral preached a skilfully delivered and interesting sermon.

After the service we all went down to the Crypt for our customary strawberry and cream tea. Many of our Friends, all of whom support us so generously throughout the year, then went on to visit The French Hospital. There they were able to see the Huguenot artefacts which were on display.

Since last year we have four new items to show:

- A picture, which was presented by Mr Yves Jaulmes, our Honorary Vice President, painted by the late Mrs Evelyn Jaulmes of the Huguenot Bible and a candle.
- A picture of Thomas Aubertin, Deputy Governor from 1951 to 1956. This was presented by Mr Andrew Aubertin.
- A small portrait of Matilda Americana Stansbury, of Maryland, c 1783 by John Pye, married to Lydia Ogier. This was presented by Mrs R. Benson.
- A mid 18<sup>th</sup> century sundial which was made by Dollond, London. This is now on a plinth in the north part of the Huguenots' Garden and will later be dedicated to the memory of the late Lady Radnor.

Planning now starts for the 287<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2005.**

***Stephen Ch de Cresipgny, Secretary***

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### **The Friends of La Providence**

*'Bénis cette maison, Que ta Providence*

*a préparée pour nos affligés'*

**This plea lies at the heart of the prayer which has opened every meeting of the governing Court of The French Hospital since September 1718. It reads, 'Bless this habitation, which Thy good Providence hath prepared for those among us in distress'.**

**The French Hospital, 'La Providence'**, founded in 1718 as a charity for poor Huguenot refugees, today provides over 60 flats for older or needy people of French Protestant descent who require accommodation, but with help always at hand in sickness or emergency.

**The Association of 'Friends of La Providence'** seeks to raise funds, allocated at the discretion of the Management Committee, for the benefit of La Providence and to serve as a link between the charity's well-wishers and its Directors and Residents. Friends with Huguenot descent can also keep in touch thereby with one of the major Huguenot charities remaining in this country.

**The Aims of the Association of Friends of La Providence**, then, are:

- To help publicise to both potential supporters and potential Residents what La Providence has to offer and what is needed to ensure its continued success
- To preserve in a practical way part of the history of the Huguenot contribution to British society
- To raise funds allocated at the discretion of the Management Committee which will help the Residents and Friends feel part of La Providence and its history

**Membership** is open to all subscribing not less than £5 per annum to The French Hospital, although we recommend a figure of £10 to non-pensioners, with Life Membership available for a payment of £150. All members will receive an Annual Report and an invitation to the celebration of the Anniversary of the Foundation in June each year, as well as other such occasions as may be organised for them.

If you would like to become a Friend of La Providence, or if you know of anyone of French Protestant descent who might like to be considered for accommodation at The French Hospital, please contact:

**The Clerk, The French Hospital, 41 La Providence, Rochester, Kent ME1 1NB.  
Tel: 01634 843107 Fax: 01634 406652, email: [theclerk@lineone.net](mailto:theclerk@lineone.net).**